



California Department of Veterans Affairs

NEWS FOR VETERANS

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January 21, 2005

NEWS FROM THE USDVA

COST-OF-LIVING RAISE BOOSTS VETERANS BENEFITS (Jan. 13, 2005)

WASHINGTON – Millions of veterans and eligible family members will see their disability compensation, pension and survivors' benefits increased.

"We want all veterans with disabilities related to the defense of our country to receive the benefits they have earned," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "With this increase, we ensure their payments keep pace with the cost of living."

A recent law signed by President Bush provides a 2.7 percent increase in disability compensation and survivors' benefits.

Eligible veterans and family members can expect to see this increase in their January checks.

Under the veterans disability compensation program, tax-free payments generally range from \$108 to \$2,299 per month depending on the degree of disability. Special payments up to \$6,576 per month apply to the most severely injured veterans.

NEW LAW ALLOWS HIGHER LIMITS IN VA HOME LOAN PROGRAM (Jan. 13, 2005)

WASHINGTON – Legislation recently signed by President Bush makes home ownership more affordable for many veterans.

Changes under the law mean veterans will be able to get no-downpayment loans of up to \$359,700. The previous ceiling was \$240,000.

"Now, more than ever, veterans will be able to make their dreams of home ownership a reality," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi.

VA-guaranteed home loans are made by banks and mortgage companies to veterans, service members and reservists. With VA guaranteeing part of the loan, veterans can receive a good interest rate without having to make a downpayment.

The changes took effect Dec. 10 when President Bush signed into law the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004. The law also allows for loan limits to keep pace with rising home values.

The new law allows VA to guarantee one-year adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs) and it extends, through 2008, VA's "hybrid ARM program," which allows veterans to lock in a favorable interest rate for at least three years. More information about VA home loan benefits is available on the Web at <http://www.homeloans.va.gov>.

NEWS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

LABOR SECRETARY ELAINE L. CHAO AWARDS \$3.78 MILLION TO PLACE MORE THAN 1,600 VETERANS IN JOBS UNDER THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (Dec. 14, 2004)

WASHINGTON-Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao announced that more than 1,600 veterans in 17 communities in 15 states will be placed in new jobs thanks to \$3.78 million in Department of Labor (DOL) grants awarded today. In addition, DOL expects another 600 veterans to receive employment and training services as a result of these grants, which are awarded under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

"The Workforce Investment Act has expanded the eligibility criteria for veterans who might not be covered by other programs," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao. "This again demonstrates President Bush's commitment and resolve to help America's veterans who have so honorably served our nation."

"We can now offer services to any honorably discharged veteran that served on active duty during a war or received a campaign or expedition badge, in addition to those with service-connected disabilities or who have recently separated or faced other significant barriers to employment," said Frederico Juarbe Jr., DOL assistant secretary for veterans' employment and training.

The grants, which are being awarded in California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Wyoming, make possible a range of services for veterans including: assessing job skills, career counseling, current labor-market information, classroom or on-the-job training, skills upgrading or retraining, and job-placement assistance. The applicants this year have been asked to focus their training efforts on career fields where the lack of a license or a certification has become a barrier to employment. The grants are administered by public agencies and nonprofit organizations that the Secretary of Labor determines have an understanding of veterans' unemployment problems.

"I am very happy that the U.S. Department of Labor has awarded one of these grants to California" said Tom Johnson Secretary of Veterans Affairs for California. "This grant of \$250,000 awarded to Veterans Initiative in Los Angeles will go a long way in helping many veterans get back on their feet after having served our country."

Authorized by Section 168 of the WIA, the grants are being awarded on a competitive basis by the department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). At the end of these six-month, first-year grants, VETS will award second-year funding to the grantees that meet or exceed the performance criteria set forth in their original award.

NOTE: A list of the grantees is available at www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/opa/OPA20042480.htm

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